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ABSTRACT

This 3-year study examined how 10 Chinese-American families from various socioeconomic and educational backgrounds fostered their children's success in school through personal, family, ethnic community, and mainstream community resources, focusing on the experiences of two particular families. The study grouped the families into three types: (1) those in which at least one parent had been born in the United States and had gone through the American educational system; (2) those in which both parents were immigrants who did not attend school in the United States; and (3) those in which both parents were immigrants who had received some schooling in the United States. The study compares a Type 1 and Type 2 family through case studies of what two such families did to enhance their children's school achievement. It found that Type 1 families did not exhibit the intensive preschool academic preparation, close monitoring behavior, and protective stance associated with Type 2 immigrant families, since the Type 1 families were more secure in the sense that their children will be successful. (MDM)

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CENTER ON FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS & CHILDREN'S LEARNING

SUCCESS IN SCHOOL

The Journey of Two Chinese-American Families

Sau-Fong Siu
Jay Feldman

Report No. 31 / October 1995

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CENTER ON FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS & CHILDREN'S LEARNING

The nation's schools must do more to improve the education of all children, but schools cannot do this alone. More will be accomplished if families and communities work with children, with each other, and with schools to promote successful students.

The mission of this Center is to conduct research, evaluations, policy analyses, and dissemination to produce new and useful knowledge about how families, schools, and communities influence student motivation, learning, and development. A second important goal is to improve the connections between and among these major social institutions.

Two research programs guide the Center's work: the Program on the Early Years of Childhood, covering children aged 0-10 through the elementary grades; and the Program on the Years of Early and Late Adolescence, covering youngsters aged 11-19 through the middle and high school grades.

Research on family, school, and community connections must be conducted to understand more about all children and all families, not just those who are economically and educationally advantaged or already connected to school and community resources. The Center's projects pay particular attention to the diversity of family cultures and backgrounds and to the diversity in family, school, and community practices that support families in helping children succeed across the years of childhood and adolescence. Projects also examine policies at the federal, state, and local levels that produce effective partnerships.

A third program of Institutional Activities includes a wide range of dissemination projects to extend the Center's national leadership. The Center's work will yield new information, practices, and policies to promote partnerships among families, communities, and schools to benefit children's learning.

ABSTRACT

A three-year study of 10 Chinese-American families with various socioeconomic and educational backgrounds examined how these families foster their children's success in school through personal, family, ethnic community, and mainstream community resources.

The families in the sample are classified as "Type I," in which at least one parent was born in the United States and has gone through the American educational system; "Type II," in which both parents are immigrants who did not attend school in this country; and "Type III," in which both parents are immigrants who have received some schooling in the United States although their earlier schooling was overseas.

This report reveals differences and similarities between the beliefs and practices of a Type I and a Type II family through case studies of two successful students and what the families do to enhance their children's school achievement and the beliefs that buttress their practices.

Introduction

An extensive review of literature on Chinese-American educational achievement concludes with this statement: "Parent values and practices are...mediated by parents' socioeconomic and educational backgrounds although the latter alone does not predict school success...each *individual* Chinese-American family has to develop its own ethnic identity and accompanying world view. We suspect that the family's perception of their roots and of American 'soil' has a significant influence on how they socialize their children and on their approach to education" (Siu, 1992, p. 33).

We are examining three years of field data to reveal how ten Chinese-American families of various socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, and with different degrees of acculturation, view education and support their young children's school success. Family support for school achievement takes many forms, including volunteering in schools, monitoring homework, purchasing equipment and materials, establishing a routine for the child, conferencing with the teachers, and providing new experiences for the child. However, parents' ability to provide support along with the actual type of support provided seem to be a function of parental knowledge and experience with American schooling and culture.

A comparative study of parental involvement of three generations of Japanese Americans in the education of their children (Shoho, 1992) found that increased direct involvement was highly related to English proficiency and familiarity with the dominant culture, including the educational system. Succeeding generations were not as hampered by socioeconomic, language, and cultural barriers as the first immigrant generation. Although our study of Chinese-American families was not initiated to test this hypothesis, our data indicate a similar overall pattern.

A major philosophical and practical difference between American and Chinese schooling is the American emphasis on the social-emotional development of children. Parents who have experienced American schooling would be more comfortable with this philosophy. In addition, immigrant families who view their status in the United States as being precarious may be concerned about their children's ability to compete, whereas American-born parents and those immigrant parents who have attained some measure of success may feel more confident about their children's prospects. Although both types of families have similar expectations and goals for their children, the immigrant children may have more obstacles, real or imagined, to face.

Immigrants, however, are not a homogenous group. Some immigrants, for example, have experienced American schools and perceive themselves as successful in their education and employment, while others have not.

Based on this proposition, the ten Chinese-American families in the sample are classified as follows: 1) Type I families, in which at least one parent was born in the United States and has gone through the American educational system, 2) Type II families, in which both parents are immigrants who did not attend school in this country, and 3) Type III families, in which both parents are immigrants who have received some schooling in the United States although their earlier schooling was overseas.

This paper will compare and contrast a Type I family and a Type II family through case studies of what two such families do to enhance their children's school achievement and the beliefs that buttress their practices. Although these families are typical of how an immigrant and a native family prepare for their children's school success, there are, of course, differences even within each type of family. The juxtaposition of the Lam family (Type II) against the Ho family (Type I) will illustrate the complex interactions between acculturation and family beliefs and practices that coalesce around education.

Profiles of Two Successful Children and Their Families

The profiles are based on analysis of data collected over three years for two children: Kenneth Lam and Julie Ho. (To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms are used in this paper when referring to children, family members, the town, and the community.) Data collection included ten family visits with the Lams and nine with the Hos. Every year, each child was observed in the classroom at least twice. In addition, the children's teachers were interviewed, and their school records and school work were reviewed.

Both Kenneth and Julie are students at Midtown School, a public school located in Urbanville, New England. Both turned eight years old in September, 1994. Both children have had the same kindergarten, first grade, and second grade teachers, and both have been considered successful by all three teachers. Both Kenneth and Julie scored above the 90th percentile in the Citywide Reading and Mathematics tests, which were administered in second grade. Midtown School has a diverse student body: 50% Asian-American (predominately

Chinese), 30% African-American, and 20% Caucasian. All three teachers were female, with the kindergarten and first grade teachers being Caucasian and the second grade teacher being African-American.

On the surface, the Lam and Ho families are very different. Julie's father was born and raised in the United States, graduated from an Ivy League school, earned a professional doctoral degree, and holds a high status, high paying professional position. Kenneth's father, on the other hand, is an immigrant from China, graduated from high school, and works as a waiter in a Chinese restaurant. Whereas Julie's mother has a college degree and chooses not to be employed, Kenneth's mother has no degree and holds a clerical position. Julie's family lives in an upscale neighborhood noted for its expensive and elegant homes and goes to the family's vacation home in a nearby state for weekends and summers; Kenneth's family used to live in a government subsidized housing development in Chinatown, but now lives in their own condominium on the periphery of Chinatown. Kenneth qualifies for the Reduced School Lunch Program, but Julie does not. English is the primary language in Julie's home; Chinese is dominant in Kenneth's home.

Although they differ as noted above, both the Hos and the Lams embrace similar educational goals for their children. Parents in both families value education and are deeply committed to their children's education. It is in their rationales and strategies for reaching the goals that we find significant differences.

Kenneth Lam

Kenneth is the younger of two children. His sister is 12 years of age and in sixth grade. The parents are the sole adults in the household. Although the Lams have relatives in the Urbanville area, interactions are infrequent. Kenneth is described by his teachers as being smart, diligent, energetic, very active, capable of working well both alone and with other children, and putting forth outstanding effort. On the negative side, at times Kenneth does not pay as close attention as he should in school. His parents note that he tends to be easily distracted. Mrs. Lam reports, "[Kenneth] gets lazy easily. He likes watching TV. He does fine when under pressure, otherwise he'll become too relaxed, loose, and disorganized." Kenneth has a caring and helping attitude, is very loving toward his sister, and freely expresses his feelings. His mother says that he is also very sociable, and that, "when I pick him up in school, I find he greets everybody on the street."

Cantonese is spoken almost exclusively in the Lam home. Kenneth is fluent in both English and Cantonese, and occasionally converses in English with his sister, but the parents always communicate with the children in Cantonese. However, both parents are able to speak

English, although with a heavy accent, and both are able to read English. Mr. Lam reads the local newspaper and *Consumer Reports*, while Mrs. Lam is required to read English documents as part of her job.

Kenneth engages in many extracurricular activities, including Kumon Math Workshops, a short-term after-school computer class, piano lessons, and a summer academic program that prepares children for the next grade level. While in kindergarten Kenneth also was enrolled in a week-end Mandarin school, which was later dropped in favor of Kung Fu lessons. Kenneth was enrolled in a summer camp in 1993 that used Mandarin as the medium of instruction. In his free time, he enjoys drawing.

Because most of Kenneth's activities are located within Chinatown, he tends to socialize with Chinese children more frequently. Although he names one Chinese and two African-American boys as his best friends, he says that he generally prefers to play with Chinese children because "I can speak Chinese to them." The Lams, more protective of Kenneth's social life, prefer that Kenneth mixes with other Chinese children, whom they think are more likely to be studious and well-behaved.

Julie Ho

Julie has an older brother who is 11 years of age and in fifth grade. Besides the parents, there are no other adults in the home, but many relatives live in the area, including Julie's paternal and maternal grandparents, a paternal aunt and her family, and maternal uncles and their families, all of whom interact on a regular basis.

Julie's most impressive characteristic is her extremely well-developed social skills which enable her to move easily between the worlds of child and adult. Julie's parents entertain friends of different races, and Julie is comfortable and charming with these friends. An observation of Julie in the classroom illustrates these skills. The observer was attempting to read a paper over Julie's and other children's shoulders. Having noticed this, Julie thoughtfully shifted her body to allow the observer to view the paper, but also did not interrupt her classmates' reading of it. Over the years, her teachers have described her as eager to learn, articulate, cooperative, having a fantastic memory, and showing a potential for leadership. However, she has a tendency to talk excessively in class.

Julie's parents describe her as very self-motivated, competitive, outgoing and "not modest at all." Yet one of the first adjectives that Julie used to describe herself was "messy," i.e., her room is not neat. In spite of Julie's confidence in her abilities in many areas, she still asks, "Mom, am I smart in Chinese School?"

English is used in parent-to-parent, parent-child, and child-to-child communication in the Ho household, although Chinese is occasionally mixed into an English sentence, mostly by Mrs. Ho. Mrs. Ho knows how to read and speak Chinese, but prefers to converse in English. Mr. Ho speaks a little Cantonese and Toisanese, but cannot read Chinese. Julie attends Chinese Language School, but is not fluent.

Like Kenneth, Julie participates in many extracurricular activities. She takes piano and ballet lessons, attends daily Chinese School after regular school, and attends Sunday School in church. In the summer, Julie has attended soccer day camp, Audubon Society day camp, an arts and crafts day camp, an out-of-state residential camp, and a local university recreational camp.

Because Julie attends activities in several different communities and not just Chinatown, she has opportunities to socialize with a diverse group of children, not all of whom are from Midtown School. Among her four best friends are one Chinese and three Caucasian girls.

Similarities and Differences in Family Beliefs and Practices

We will compare and contrast the Ho family with the Lam family on 10 dimensions that pertain to beliefs and practices: the meaning of and ingredients for success, parental perception of their roles in education, socialization toward functioning in a multicultural society, parental expectations and rationale for schooling and extracurricular activities, attention to child's social-emotional development, childrearing practices, planning and obtaining information regarding schooling, school involvement and parental assertiveness, monitoring homework and promoting reading, and the family in the context of the community.

The Meaning of and Ingredients for Success

Success to the Lams means "having your head sticking out above others," a Chinese idiom that is equivalent to the English word "outstanding." In practical terms, this means graduating from college and holding a steady, well-respected professional job. For Kenneth to be successful, his parents firmly believe that he must be able to have an edge in competitive mainstream society. This requires a conscious effort on the part of the entire family, although innate ability is certainly not discounted. When asked independently on different occasions, Mr. and Mrs. Lam both say that success is sixty percent innate ability and forty percent hard work. "If you are not gifted, then you need to strive hard. This is the only way to supplement your insufficiency," says Mr. Lam. Gifted or not, the Lams want to make certain that Kenneth puts the best effort into his school work. The "correct track" includes getting the

proper grades (at least honor roll) and developing discipline and self-control. The Lams are also aware that Kenneth will be entering a multicultural world and that in order to ensure his success in such an environment, Kenneth must have experiences that will broaden his outlook, he must understand the strengths and weaknesses of each race, and he must work harder than Whites.

In the Ho family, a successful person is defined as one who is happy and likable, able to get along with others, and is financially self-sufficient through holding a professional, "practical" job, that is, a job requiring skills that are in demand in the market place. Careers in writing, dancing, musical performance, or acting are "impractical." Commenting on Julie's future, Mrs. Ho remarked, "I don't see any problem unless she really undergoes a dramatic personality change, but I don't see that happening." This statement illustrates the laid-back philosophy that Mrs. Ho and her husband adopt in raising Julie. Mrs. Ho is confident that her daughter will become a successful adult if she continues to be independent and to speak up in order to have her needs met. An important ingredient for success is the ability to get along well with others of different races, and in this regard, the Hos serve as role models with friends who are Caucasian, Chinese, African-American, and of mixed heritage.

Mrs. Ho believes that effort is more important than natural ability, so children must be encouraged when they are young, and some need more encouragement than others. Julie, for example, needs very little encouragement because she has strong self-motivation. Before she got to the age when school homework was assigned, Julie would often ask for some from her parents when she watched her older brother doing homework.

Parental Perception of Their Roles in Education

Concerned about the American public school's general laxness, the Lams view their role as supplementing what the school is doing and filling in the gaps. They are clear about their responsibility—to teach their child the skills they believe he needs in order to compete and come out ahead. This role begins even before the child starts school. Believing that there is a proper path for Kenneth to follow, the Lams keep focusing Kenneth's attention on this path. They refer to this path as "kwai doe," which literally means a track, such as a railway track. Kenneth's ability to choose his activities is limited only to those that the parents consider trivial or mere frills. Mrs. Lam explains, "As parents, our purpose is to guide him.

The parents' responsibility is to guide him through a path that might have a greater likelihood for success."

Besides offering overall guidance, Mrs. Lam assumes other roles. She keeps track of schedules, files all of Kenneth's homework and drawings, attends Kenneth's performances, and participates in parent-teacher conferences. On the first day of every school year, she tries to accompany each of her children, believing that her presence will help the child feel supported. Mr. Lam does not generally show up in school, not so much because of his work schedule, but, according to Mrs. Lam, he "does not feel comfortable socializing." Mr. Lam's role in preparing for Kenneth's school achievement consists of clipping newspaper articles about education for his wife to read and to file away, purchasing needed equipment such as a computer, talking about current events, and planning family vacations that are educational in nature.

Despite limited financial resources, the Lams spend freely on their children's educational needs, viewing these expenditures as an investment that will later yield a return. Among the purchases are a piano, a computer, a globe, and an electronic dictionary which pronounces words. Mrs. Lam explains, "My English is poor, so I use a dictionary machine. You can press a key and it gives you the sound. I used it to teach him." When Kenneth was in kindergarten, his parents bought him a pencil holder to help him learn how to hold a pencil properly.

To enhance their children's school success, the Hos view their role as keeping informed about the school's curriculum and operations, getting to know the teachers, monitoring their children's progress, and speaking up to ensure that the children's needs are met. For Mrs. Ho, this means deep and regular involvement in the school as a volunteer, decision-maker, and observer. Attending school functions and children's performances is a priority for both parents. However, although Mr. and Mrs. Ho have paid for Julie's many lessons and camps, they never have referred to this as a financial investment in education. Unlike the Lams, Julie's parents do not talk about the existence of one correct path. They do offer some guidance and make some choices for their two children, but the Hos emphasize their role as "being there for the children." This comparison is elaborated later in this paper in our discussion of childrearing practices.

Socialization toward functioning in a multicultural society

As Swap (1993) points out, "Parents of color confront particular challenges in preparing their children to be successful in school. Not only do they need to prepare their children to be successfully bicultural, but they also need to help children learn to negotiate instances of racism without losing motivation or self-esteem" (p. 119). This section will explore issues related to parents' and children's cultural identity, and how parents socialize their children to be bicultural.

Parent's and Children's Cultural Identity. The Hos identify strongly with mainstream American culture, but they move easily in Chinese circles as well. Mrs. Ho distinguishes herself from immigrant families, declaring, "I am an American" and preferring to converse in English, although Cantonese is her first language. Both Mr. and Mrs. Ho grew up in racially mixed schools with friends from all racial backgrounds. They live in a neighborhood that is almost exclusively Caucasian, and Mr. Ho's professional world is almost exclusively Caucasian. The Hos also maintain close ties to Chinatown through their church, Julie's school, and community agencies. In contrast, the Lams see themselves as outsiders looking in on the American mainstream, defining themselves as Chinese, speaking in Chinese, and primarily using the resources of the Chinatown community.

Both Kenneth and Julie have been socialized to have a strong sense of their Chinese heritage. The parents' attempts are apparently successful—when asked how they would identify themselves, both Kenneth and Julie promptly answer, "I am Chinese," although Julie also adds, "But I am also an American."

It is important to note, however, that irrespective of the parents' own view of their cultural identity, both families agree that people in mainstream society tend to view and treat both the Lams and the Hos as Chinese. Neither family has personally experienced incidents of overt discrimination. They are nevertheless aware that stereotyping and prejudice against Chinese-Americans exist. For Mr. Lam, his primary concern is the recurrence of an anti-Chinese movement, which has occurred in the United States in the late nineteenth century and in several Southeast Asian countries in the 1950's and 1960's. He sees the Chinese situation in America as precarious, and describes racial discrimination as omnipresent. Consequently, he contends that the Chinese must "work harder, longer, and sacrifice more." For example, at the beginning of the second grade, Kenneth was experiencing some problems which his teacher thought were a result of a language barrier. Mrs. Lam had to correct the

teacher's perception that Kenneth was a student who had transferred from the school's bilingual program. This incident served to reinforce the parent's feelings that "Kenneth may be born in the United States, but Americans will always see him as Chinese. He needs to have an extra skill to compete."

In contrast, Mrs. Ho feels very secure and does not cite racial discrimination as a significant force. While recognizing that she is sometimes asked to serve in an organization or on a committee as a "token Chinese," she does not allow this to bother her, viewing it as a challenge instead. What is common is that neither family emphasizes racism in socializing their children.

Keeping to Chinese Traditions. The Lams hold to more Chinese traditions than do the Hos. The Lams have an altar for their ancestors in their apartment and celebrate traditional Chinese holidays. The Hos attend a Christian Church in Chinatown. Both families are similar in that they teach what they believe to be Chinese values, such as respect for elders, respect for teachers, being courteous, and taking school seriously. There is, however, a subtle difference in how deference for authority figures is interpreted by the two families. The Hos put a limit on deference, believing that Julie should not blindly bow to authority, but must be an independent thinker. A distinction is made between "obedience" and "submission" and they are proud that their children are not intimidated by adults. Conversely, the Lams do not stress independent thought in socialization; rather, their way is more in keeping with Chinese traditions. Contradicting a parent is unacceptable; "In China, you dare not say it is 'two' if your parents say it is 'one'," says Mrs. Lam.

Parents' Preparation of Their Children for a Multicultural World. Both the Ho and Lam families understand that their children will be functioning in a multi-ethnic environment, but they have different views on what this means. Mr. Lam discusses how Kenneth needs to understand early in life the strengths and weaknesses of each race. Chinese cannot effectively compete with some races in certain areas, such as athletics, but are very strong in academics. Consequently, Kenneth should strive to develop his intellectual skills. Competition is a recurring theme in conversations with Mr. Lam.

Mr. and Mrs. Ho have always had friends of all races and have moved freely among them. They place a strong emphasis on their children's ability to make friends with people of different racial backgrounds. Mrs. Ho's understanding of a multicultural world is that it is important to have cooperation and harmony with other races. Whereas the Lams prefer

Kenneth's friends to be Chinese, the Hos have no such preference at all—they could even accept Julie marrying a non-Chinese person.

Parental Expectations and Rationale for Schooling and Extracurricular Activities

Expectations for the Child's Future. Both families have similar expectations for their children: attending well-respected public middle- and high schools, with private schools as back-up options, and eventually graduating from college. The children will have practical careers and become professionals. Although both Kenneth and Julie have exhibited artistic talents, neither family wants their children to become artists. Mr. Lam believes that, "there are many different career fields that are not practical. Neither drawing nor music is the path that we want to guide him through." Similarly, Mrs. Ho says that she will not encourage Julie to pursue a career in music or dance. This, according to Mrs. Ho, is her "Chinese decision." The concern is that "I am just like any Chinese, very practical. I don't think that it's solid, in a sense that you can make money. I don't think that money is the most important thing, but it certainly makes life easy." Mrs. Ho recounts that she chose accounting for her major in college due to its practicality.

Rationale for Schooling. Despite the similarities in long-term expectations, the Hos and the Lams part company when it comes to short-term expectations and rationales for schooling and extracurricular activities. These differences probably reflect the parents' own schooling and social background. The Lams' rationale for schooling is primarily economic while the Hos, who are more successful economically, view schooling as first and foremost an endeavor for personal enrichment and enjoyment.

For Kenneth, college is part of the path to a competitive edge and financial success. To help his son appreciate the benefits of school, Mr. Lam tells him that, "if he doesn't go to school, he will become homeless." Thus, for the Lams, school is a tool for achieving socioeconomic success. Mrs. Lam notes that, "It's just that when I was a child I didn't have those opportunities, so now if I have the ability, I want him to have the best. It's up to him to do something with what he learns. I believe that it's better to give an education than to leave him money. A good education can stay with him for the rest of his life. No one can take it away from him. Money can be spent and gone." Since the Lams want to make sure that Kenneth has the opportunity to be successful as an adult, Kenneth needs to work hard

and be successful now. The Lams expect Kenneth to be on the honor roll and to do well in Kumon and Chinese school. Class rank is extremely important.

In contrast, Julie's mother does not think that college education would guarantee a good job. Children, in her opinion, should not attend college simply to please their parents or to obtain a meal ticket, but rather to enrich themselves as people. The school is seen as a valuable place that provides an opportunity to make and keep friends. Thus, Mrs. Ho does not seem particularly concerned if Julie is not on the honor roll. In fact, when Julie received a conduct grade that left her off the honor roll, Mrs. Ho matter-of-factly noted, "Julie got A's in academics so that's not a problem but she got a C in behavior because she talks too much. You need an A or B in behavior to get on the honor roll." While Mrs. Ho did not seem disturbed by this, she reported that, "Julie was of course unhappy."

Rationale for Extracurricular Activities. The parents' rationale and choice of their children's extracurricular activities parallels their rationale for schooling. For the Lams, this means that they choose activities for Kenneth that will help him gain a competitive edge and prepare for the future, while the Hos allow Julie the opportunity to choose whichever activities she would like to explore.

Many of Kenneth's activities are designed to augment the school's regular academic program or to provide an additional skill that could prove useful later in life. Kenneth takes Kumon math workshops to enhance his mathematical skills and, indeed, teachers have noted that his mathematics skills are above grade level. The parents hope that Kenneth will develop discipline, confidence, and self-control through kung fu lessons, which also improve his physical condition, an important consideration since Kenneth suffers from asthma. Mrs. Lam believes that becoming familiar with Mandarin, the official language of China, will give Kenneth a competitive edge in the future, given the increasing economic importance of the Pacific Rim. Piano lessons are viewed solely as a mechanism to relieve the child's stress in some way. Although Kenneth also is very interested in art, Mr. Lam does not believe that this interest warrants special classes.

The Hos view extracurricular activities in much the same manner as they do schooling; they are not viewed as tools or as being necessarily related to academics, but rather they are things to enjoy. Mrs. Ho acknowledges that Julie has many interests to explore and should be allowed to do so as long as they fit both her and her parents' schedules. In general, Julie's activities are chosen by her and not by her parents.

Attention to Child's Social and Emotional Development

Kenneth often discusses his feelings and, at times, the Lams seem confused about how to respond. Mrs. Lam says, "Kenneth has been talking about feelings a lot in recent months. One time in the park, he told his sister 'Don't say that to me—my feelings are hurt!' One time he was physically punished by his Dad...Later he told me, 'People shouldn't hit people!' He also gets very upset when he sees his sister crying...He'll then run to comfort his sister, 'Calm down, tell me, did Mom hit you?'...'Lo fan' (Westerners) seem to express their feelings directly. Whether it's good or bad I can't say."

This is not to imply that the Lams do not care about their child's emotional state. Mrs. Lam has remarked several times that every child needs some fun and some free time. Still, the world is full of pressure. "As you want him to be a leader, training must start at a young age throughout his period of growth. Let him live under pressure, so that he can get used to it," observes Mr. Lam. He believes that the answer does not lie in removing all pressure but in providing an outlet, such as music, for ameliorating stress.

In the Ho family, considerable emphasis is placed on the two children's social and emotional development. One of the main qualities that Mrs. Ho wishes to cultivate in her children is the ability to get along with other people. This quality is more important than getting straight A's. She says that, "I do it from the early years, that's very important...I started my older son in day care when he was two years old...When he started saying everything's, 'Mine, mine,' I said, this is it! Put him with other kids, so he doesn't believe everything's his. I mean, it's important. I don't like my child not to be able to get along with other kids." Other kids, for Mrs. Ho, means children of different races. She adds, "I hope my kids would not be prejudiced and I will really not tolerate that from them."

Childrearing Practices

The Lams essentially use the "carrot and stick" approach for disciplining Kenneth. For example, Mrs. Lam says that, "Kenneth would throw tantrums and his father had to give him plenty of chewing gum to coax him into going to school." On the other hand, Kenneth also receives physical punishment. At one point during an interview, Kenneth had a tantrum and was told by his mother that she would hit him with a feather duster and that his father would also punish him when he came home. Kenneth's reaction to physical punishment is certainly

not typical of traditional Chinese children; he would sometimes protest the unfairness and occasionally even strike back at his parents. The Lams do not give Kenneth a lot of choice, believing that parents know better than a young child what is needed. As Mrs. Lam asserts, "I think that young children just like to play. They won't initiate studying on their own. I think they need to be at least 15 before they can responsibly choose what they like. Young children do not have the ability to analyze what they need, so you'll have to push them."

The Hos do not have the same issues with discipline as the Lams. Consistent limits with Julie are set and if she breaks these limits, she gets a "time-out"; rarely is physical punishment used. As Mrs. Ho elaborates, "I will tell Julie, 'This is it' and I will list a punishment if this doesn't follow...Cause they're not really bad, and there's no need to. I mean, take away privileges when they don't want to do their homework. It's a natural consequence kind of thing." However, Mrs. Ho is "not against physical punishment. Because sometimes she gets slapped when she doesn't move. But she doesn't get it that often. She doesn't like to be yelled at, so the fact that you scream at her, you already know, so she doesn't get physical punishment that often." Mrs. Ho also laughingly notes, "Julie will nag me to death. I can't slap her for nagging!"

The parents' discipline of Julie is low key. At a visit to the Hos' vacation house, the researcher observed Julie occasionally whining when she did not get her way. Her parents responded by quietly saying, "Julie, don't whine." Julie was given freedom to explore and experience her surroundings. Mr. Ho allowed her to be in their boat with her older brother without the presence of an adult. Similarly, Julie was allowed to play near the water without her parents hovering over her.

In some situations, as in the choice of a public school for the older son, the Hos make the ultimate decision. In other situations, such as whether to drop Chinese school or to sign up for sailing lessons, Julie is given the freedom to decide.

Planning and Obtaining Information Regarding Schooling

Both Mrs. Ho and Mrs. Lam have ready access to information about schools. As a volunteer in the school, Mrs. Ho "hears things." Indeed, she stays active in the school precisely for the reason of "getting to know the teachers and knowing what's going on, at least something when it's going on." In addition, Mrs. Ho is probably able to gather

information from teachers and administrators beyond official channels. For example, she socializes with the librarian outside of school and attends the same church as the principal.

Mrs. Lam's position as a clerk in the State Department of Education allows her access to some information regarding schools. However, much of the Lams' information seems to come from the news media and from a grapevine comprised of other parents. For example, prior to enrolling the children in Midtown School, they had read in a newspaper that Midtown was one of the best in the city. Mr. Lam explains that he regularly "compares the way of education in China, in Hong Kong, with the education here. For other information about here, locally, I'll ask our relatives and friends." Information about academic programs, summer camps, and workbooks is often obtained through serendipitous encounters with other parents in the piano teacher's house, neighbors in the hallway, or even Chinese strangers in the library. Clearly, Mrs. Lam looks for many opportunities to extract information about fostering academic achievement.

According to Mr. Lam, their extended family members are not good sources of information because "many of their children are not doing well in school. Some of the parents...neglect everything. The kids fall behind in school when they are being neglected."

School Involvement and Parental Assertiveness

Both Mrs. Ho and Mrs. Lam are involved in the school and are assertive about the needs of their own children. Mrs. Lam observes classes at the school, participates in parent-teacher conferences, serves as escort on some field trips, and attends Kenneth's performances. Although she attends parents' council meetings, language poses a barrier. Mrs. Lam, when asked if she holds any offices, exclaims, "Oh no, I can't speak the English language well. I will try to attend the meetings." And in another interview she shares, "I want to be active but I don't know English." She never verbally expresses her views in these meetings.

School involvement is described by Mrs. Lam as "my duty." She says, "My child will benefit from my participation, and I want the teacher to know I care about my child." However, to attend school functions she must schedule time off from work in advance. As noted earlier, Mr. Lam does not involve himself in school activities.

Because Mrs. Ho chooses not to work outside the home, she has a lot more free time to devote to Midtown School. Like Mrs. Lam, Mrs. Ho observes classes, talks to teachers and, with her husband, attends Julie's performances. In addition to being a member of the school council and other school committees, she volunteers in the library, helps with fund-raising, and works on the parents' newsletter. She also participates in an annual parent-teacher retreat to discuss curriculum issues. She is in school at least once a week and is a well-known figure in the school community.

The nature of parental involvement in the school for the two mothers differs in several ways. Unlike Mrs. Lam, Mrs. Ho has contacts with school personnel on both a social and a professional level. For example, Mrs. Ho invited the school librarian and her husband for a weekend at the Hos' vacation house along with other, non-school related, couples, and she was also involved in talking to teachers about the school's curriculum at a parent-teacher retreat. Thus, Mrs. Ho's relationship with school personnel is collegial; whereas, outside of routine parent-teacher conferences, Mrs. Lam talks to teachers only when Kenneth is experiencing a problem. Mrs. Lam's involvement is limited to one-shot events such as field trips, while Mrs. Ho is involved in projects of a long-term nature. The only school project Mrs. Lam has been involved in was recruiting host families for a Japanese student exchange program. Language was not a barrier because this project involved soliciting other Chinese-speaking families over the telephone.

Although Mrs. Ho is involved mostly in activities that benefit the entire school and Mrs. Lam is involved mostly in activities that affect her own child, both are equally assertive in championing their children's rights. Mrs. Lam recently had a problem with Kenneth's second grade teacher. Kenneth had received a negative comment concerning his listening skills. Mrs. Lam describes this incident: "I went to see his teacher and she thought there might be a language barrier between Kenneth and the rest of the class. I told her that was not the problem because he did not have any trouble communicating before in kindergarten and first grade. I asked her where my son's seat was; she told me he was sitting in the outer row and I told her that maybe my son was not concentrating in class because of his seat. If he had not heard her, he could not follow her directions. And I requested that she give my son a seat in the front." As a result, Kenneth's seat was changed and his behavior improved. Each year Mrs. Lam tries to find out which teacher in the next grade is the strictest and requests this teacher for her child.

Due to her position at the school, Mrs. Ho knows that teachers are not pleased when parents make requests for certain teachers. However, she asserts, "I can understand why they don't like it, but it's my kid and I must be guided by my self-interest. I will fight for the best things for my children even though this may step on someone else's toes."

Monitoring Homework and Promoting Reading

Both Mr. and Mrs. Lam believe that "children before the age of 11 or 12 learn quickly, but after that it gets harder to teach them anything." Thus, they maintain that it is important for Kenneth to be studying now when his mind is better able to absorb information. From an early age, Kenneth has been getting homework assigned by his parents. Mrs. Lam recalls, "Even before Head Start I would teach him every day after I came home—things like 'What is your name? Where do you live? How many brothers and sisters do you have?' and the names of the colors and so on. He was in K-1, which was only two hours a day, and every day after school his father...would give him copies of worksheets to work on, so he learned his ABC's."

Mrs. Lam believes that homework, "is important to develop good study habits in children, so even though the school gives no homework, I make up little additional problems for Kenneth to do." Kenneth's homework is carefully checked every day. Once the child reaches middle school, as Kenneth's older sister has, Mrs. Lam will stop tutoring and checking the homework if it becomes too difficult for her.

In contrast, the Hos have never found it necessary to create homework for Julie in order to keep her ahead. But Julie herself often would ask for some work when she saw her brother doing his homework. In addition, primarily for entertainment, Mr. Ho would sometimes make up interesting mathematics word problems involving Barbie and super-heroes for the children on the drive to their vacation house. Mrs. Ho does not see the need to establish any special routine to help Julie with her homework. Julie works fast--"She can't stand it hanging over her." Mrs. Ho used to correct her older son's homework, but she has stopped doing that, realizing that if she corrects his homework, then, "the teacher doesn't know what he doesn't know...[Now] I make sure the homework is right, and sometimes, with my son especially, what he doesn't get right, then I will say, 'There are five problems and there's one problem wrong,'...I will let him find it."

Both Mrs. Ho and Julie describe their family as a reading family. Their family truly loves books. In fact, Mr. Ho recently built a floor-to-ceiling bookcase to house the overflow of books. The Hos also have many books in the vacation house. They believe that it is not important what the family members are reading as long as they are reading. The Hos regularly read to their children; even the older son, a fifth-grader, still likes to be read to. Mr. Ho reads bedtime stories to the children, with the added benefit of fostering contact with the children since he works long hours and does not spend much time with them.

Both the Hos and the Lams visit the library often. Mr. Lam subscribes to many magazines in both Chinese and English and these are in view on the coffee table. However, the Lams do not read to their children, nor do books play such a large role in their family relationships.

The Family in the Context of the Community

The community can be conceptualized as a sociability arena, an interpersonal influence center, a mutual aid system, an organizational base, and a reference group (Warren & Warren, 1977). Communities are an important source of support and resources for families. Family, friends, cultural groups, and geographic communities can provide information about children's activities as well as programs for parents. However, the family itself must identify community resources, choose which needs to fulfill, and access these resources. By examining which resources a family uses, an understanding of the family's sense and definition of their community can be gained.

The Hos and the Lams differ in their use of resources. The Lams use resources that are almost exclusively found in a single geographical community, Chinatown. They live on the border of Chinatown, Kenneth goes to school in Chinatown, and both Kenneth and his sister's extracurricular activities take place in Chinatown. They, as well as the Hos, do use a library that is outside Chinatown. The Hos, meanwhile, use the resources of many different geographical areas. Julie goes to school in Chinatown but does not live there. She attends summer camp in a number of different locations throughout the city, and even attends camp in another state.

Both families also use different communities to gather information. As mentioned earlier, the Lams rely on mass media such as newspapers and magazines. They rarely seek

out their relatives for information concerning schools and extracurricular activities because they probably know more than their relatives do. The Hos primarily use friends and family as sources of information about schools and extracurricular activities. As noted, the Hos have forged friendships with members of the school community, and Julie has attended camp with her out-of-state cousins near the cousins' home.

As noted previously, Mrs. Ho is very active in the school, serving on the school council. She also is very active in her community church. Mr. Ho has been a church deacon and a board member for a community arts center in an area adjacent to Chinatown. The couple belongs to their neighborhood residential association, although they are not very active, mostly because they are not particularly interested in the issues that have been raised by the group. Mrs. Ho says that they both like to volunteer, but that she and her husband purposefully volunteer for different organizations. The Lams, on the other hand, are not joiners of any formal organization. Mrs. Lam's involvement with the Japanese student exchange program is the extent of the Lams' formal involvement in the community.

In many ways, therefore, the Lams' community is more limited than that of the Hos'. The Lams are linked to the Chinatown area, having lived in Chinatown since they came to the United States. They prefer that Kenneth play with Chinese friends, most of whom live in Chinatown.

Interestingly, Mr. and Mrs. Ho have actually spent a longer period of time in Chinatown than the Lams, because they grew up in the area. They maintain a strong connection to Chinatown through the community church and through their relatives who live or work in Chinatown. However, the Hos are linked to many other communities as well. They enroll their children in extracurricular activities in many areas of the city, their friends are not limited to Chinatown residents, and their volunteer work reaches beyond Chinatown. Mrs. Ho puts it well: "I know a lot about Chinatown, but I am not of Chinatown."

The Children's Motivations and Perceptions

Parental beliefs and practices relating to education have been discussed at length in this paper, but these constitute only a part of the equation for school success. Children, with their unique abilities, personalities, and attitudes, filter parental expectations and values in their own ways. This section will examine what characteristics Kenneth and Julie bring to this equation.

Before continuing this discussion, however, it is important to point out that while parents often hold the same philosophy, values, and expectations for all their children, and even provide similar opportunities, each child is different in motivation and capability. Identical parent practices could evoke different reactions in different children within the same family. For various reasons one child in the family may do better than another child. Parents find it both natural and necessary to modify existing motivational strategies or develop new ones to help their children meet their expectations. For example, Mrs. Ho needs to limit her son's TV watching, but finds it unnecessary to do so for Julie because Julie sets limits on herself.

One striking commonality between Julie and Kenneth is their extremely positive feeling about school. They do far more than tolerate school—they enjoy it! When shown pictures of children representing different emotions and traits and asked to describe her feelings about school, Julie chose interested, excited, satisfied, friendly, smart, and affectionate, and she did not choose bored or angry. Julie is very comfortable in school. She is a very socially adept young girl who feels at ease with adults. Over the years Julie has had three different homeroom teachers in Midtown School, with very different personalities and teaching styles, but she loves them all. Speaking of her second grade teacher, Julie exclaims, "I love Mrs. C! Sometimes I even miss her a lot when she goes away for just one day."

When asked if she was happy with her score of 80 percent on a Chinese School test, Julie replied, "better with a 99." When asked what activities she likes to do in her free time, Julie replied that she likes all activities, especially reading and drawing. However, she does not like television "because it takes time away from your homework."

Kenneth's kindergarten teacher describes him as coming to school every day with a smile and a sparkle, ready to learn and willing to make his presence felt. He showed his

affection for his teachers by making cards for them. This positive attitude toward school has continued. At the age of five, when asked by the researcher to write any Chinese word, the first word Kenneth chose to write was "lo see," meaning teacher. He chose a happy face when shown pictures of children and asked about school. Mrs. Lam related that on entering first grade, Kenneth remarked that he liked the fact that there was more homework. Even on the first day of school, Kenneth told his mother, "I work hard, Mom." Recognizing that he needs some free time to play, the Lams recently changed Kenneth's schedule so that he has no organized extracurricular activities on the weekends. Mrs. Lam comments that on a school day Kenneth comes home with so much energy that he cannot possibly be stressed, although she (the mother) is. Nonetheless, there is some recent indication of a strain: during the second semester of second grade, Kenneth wrote in his composition book, "I hate going to three schools!"

Julie and Kenneth differ in their motivations for doing well in school. Julie is very self-motivated—her mother describes her as being "driven" and "competitive." For example, even though she enjoys Chinese Language School, she says she is not satisfied with her performance there. When excessive talking kept her from the honor roll, she was much more upset than were her parents.

Kenneth's motivation to do well in school is at least partly to please his parents and to meet the standards they set for him. Mrs. Lam recalls that one time Kenneth brought home a report card with a rating of "3" (fair) for one subject. Rather than expressing frustration over failing to meet his own standard, he verbalized that his parents would probably be angry at him.

Summary and Conclusions

The Lams believe that they are at a disadvantage in preparing Kenneth for success. They see themselves as outsiders looking in on mainstream society. They want Kenneth to succeed in that setting, but their efforts are influenced by their relative lack of knowledge of mainstream culture. They did not attend school in the United States, and, by their own definition, they are not successful in America. Although they put considerable effort into helping their children succeed, there is little connection between their own experience and the experience they want for their children. The Lams can be described as using their own unfulfilled aspirations to fuel their effort to help their children succeed in school. They attach great importance to academic grades. The intense effort placed on keeping their children on the correct path to success is a central part of their familial relationships.

In contrast, for the Hos, continuity does exist between school success and life success. They have effectively negotiated two cultures, experiencing success both in their schooling and their career. Secure in the sense that their children will be successful, the Hos do not exhibit the intensive preschool academic preparation, close monitoring behavior and protective stance associated with many Type II immigrant families. They do not need to place as strong an emphasis on helping their children succeed academically; they have the latitude to focus on their children's social and emotional development. This, too, could be a product of their own success in navigating the American school system. The Hos see the value of their children having many interests and becoming well-rounded. Given their family's affluence, Julie and her brother have seemingly unlimited opportunities to have enriching experiences. One misstep does not knock them off their path to success.

Wang (1991) identifies five types of Chinese-American identities: the sojourner, the accommodator, the assimilator, the ethnically proud, and the uprooted. Siu (1992) theorizes that, irrespective of how long families have lived in the United States, the type of identity or mentality of the parents will influence their approach to education. The Lams seem to exemplify the accommodator identity and the Hos, the ethnically proud identity.

The Wang typology of identities goes beyond the usual classification of immigrant versus American-born, or U.S. citizen versus non-U.S. citizen. Mrs. Lam is a U.S. citizen, and the Lams are not recent immigrants, having been in this country close to 20 years. According to Wang's definition, accommodators are immigrants who have accepted the fact

of their residing in the United States, but are still seeking acceptance and trying to take root in American soil where the seed has fallen. The ethnically proud are either immigrants or American-born people who believe they are part of the mainstream and thus are entitled to what all other Americans possess. They may or may not know much about their Chinese heritage; nonetheless, they are proud of it.

It stands to reason that those parents who know and have succeeded in an American school system would be in a better position to interpret their children's school experiences and be able to provide support more consistent with the philosophy of American schools. Parents who are successful themselves also would have more confidence about their children's chances for success. In fact, they may even take this for granted. Whereas children of successful parents are already ahead, children of parents who define themselves as not being successful must compete to get ahead.

Mainstream educators may be tempted to conclude from this paper that the Ho family's approach is the better way of supporting children's school success. It is understandable because Julie's parents' childrearing philosophies and practices are more consistent with those espoused by White, middle-class principals, teachers, and mental health professionals. The mother's intensive and extensive involvement in the school's operations is also highly valued by mainstream schools. However, we are not trying to identify *the* right way of fostering young children's school success—there is more than one way to arrive at similar educational goals. The school's responsibility is to try to understand the diversity that exists even within the same ethnic group of parents. The results of this comparative study demonstrate that whatever the parents do makes sense to them, given their experiences and their perception of the larger forces in our society. Being active in school decision-making bodies and serving as school volunteers should not be the only benchmark for measuring parental concern for education. Furthermore, different children respond to different motivational strategies adopted by parents. We have shown that parents with less money, less knowledge, and/or more environmental constraints can and do foster their children's success in school by making the most of personal, family, ethnic community, and mainstream community resources.

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